(c) Village-wise provision of sanitary latrines and tap water is not monitored at the Central Government level.

Medicinal and Aromatic Plants in Himachal Pradesh

743. SHRI KRISHAN LAL SHARMA : Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that Himachal Pradesh is rich in medicinal and aromatic plants;

(b) whether it is also a fact that many of them are on the verge of extinction and some have already become extinct;

(c) if so, whether H.P. in cooperation with C.S.I.R. have formulated any plan for their revival and regeneration;

(d) whether the Central Government have explored their potential in foreign countries; and

(e) if so, the steps being taken by Government to ensure their growth and exports ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, DEPARTMENT OF ELECTRONICS AND DEPARTMENT OF OCEAN DEVELOPMENT AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (SHRI P. R. KUMARAMANGALAM) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Some plant species like viola serpens, aconitum deinorrhizum, dioscorea deltoidea, jurinea macrocephala have become rare due to over-exploitation.

(c) CSIR Complex, Palampur, a constituent laboratory of CSIR, has been making efforts for the propagation of selected medicinal and aromatic plants of high value, such as tagetes minuta, heracleum candicans, picrohiza kurroa and taxus baccata.

(d) and (e) The aromatic oils of some of these plants have export potential. Some steps in promoting this activity have been initiated in collaboration with local growers and perfumeries.

744. [Transferred to 4th December 1992]

Acquisition of Genetic Engineering Technology

745. SHRI S. MADHAVAN : Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state :

(a) whether there is any proposal to acquire genetic engineering technology to produce transgenic cotton plants that will resist pests from the U.S. Company which has developed this technology; and

(b) if so, what are the details thereof ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, DEPARTMENT OF ELECTRONICS AND DEPARTMENT OF OCEAN DEVELOPMENT AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (SHRI P. R. KUMARAMANGALAM) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The Department of Biotechnology, through an Inter-Ministerial Negotiation Team, is negotiating with M/s MONSANTO INC., USA for obtaining the technology package for production insect resistant transgenic cotton plant varieties.

Study on Collision between the Earth and a Comet

746. SHRI B. K. HARIPRASAD : Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government are aware of the forecast made by Australian scientists of a collision between the Earth and a comet on 14th August, 2116 AD as reported in The Times of India dated the 28th October, 1992; and

(b) whether Indian scientists have varified these findings, if so, the details thereof ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, DEPARTMENT OF ELECTRONICS AND DEPARTMENT OF OCEAN DEVELOPMENT AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (SHRI P. R. KUMARAMANGALAM) : (a) Yes, Sir.